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## AMERICA GOT ANGRY – THE RADICALIZATION OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE CONTEMPORARY U.S. ON THE EXAMPLE OF DONALD TRUMP’S RHETORIC

### Abstract

It is the intention of the following paper to delve into the problem of the progressing radicalization of the American political discourse from the perspective of linguistic, cultural and political studies. I will probe into the rhetorical coarseness and specious persuasive strategies of Donald Trump’s discourse, for he has taken the American political scene by storm. The issues related with popular entertainment, culture of the new anger, political correctness or hate speech, together with their social ramifications, will be taken into scrutiny. It remains beyond doubt that the quality of public and political debate has a tangible effect on the society as a whole, which is why it is necessary to understand rhetorical manifestations of the latest trends in public discourses as well as their aftereffects.

**Keywords:** rhetoric, radicalization, politics, discourse, political correctness

### 1. Introduction

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has been marked by – imagined or not – cultural, religious and ideological conflicts of seemingly irreconcilable nature. For various reasons different groups of interest pushed world’s public opinion to believe that radicalization poses the biggest threat to the western societies and the global order. Nothing could be more true. Nevertheless, I do not have in mind radicals such as terrorists or religious fundamentalists but American homegrown politicians who continue to poison public debate with their venomous language of hatred and manipulation. Words of politicians tend to carry weight, thus the corruption of the language of political debate can lead to the decay of the very fabric of democratic societies – the public deliberative sphere. The problem of politics’ rhetorical ethics is of ancient pedigree, still by no means outdated. It is in the purview of the following paper to

probe into the progressing radicalization of American political discourse, taking Donald Trump as a study subject, for he is a politician believed to be the most telling example of the recent political linguistic radicalization. I wish to investigate the rhetorical artifices harnessed by Donald Trump in his quest for political ascension as well as I intend to explain, at least to some degree, the success of his specious rhetoric. The issues related with popular entertainment, culture of the new anger, political correctness or hate speech, together with their social ramifications, will be taken into scrutiny. My interest in Trump's persuasive strategies stems from the deep conviction that the condition of modern democratic societies can be measured by the substance of political rhetoric. It remains beyond doubt that the quality of public and political debate has a tangible effect on the society as a whole, which is why it is necessary to understand rhetorical manifestations of the latest trends in public discourses as well as their aftereffects.

## 2. Politics of entertainment

The metaphor of politics as a theater has taken root in the world in the course of generations. Nevertheless, the political landscape of the recent decades has opened vistas to the more accurate equation of politics with the show business, which is particularly observable in the context of the U.S. presidential races. Umberto Eco claimed that one of the most symptomatic features of our civilization is the progressing and profound carnivalization of our lives, thus the definition of human being as *animal rationale* has been successfully replaced by the definition of *homo ludens*<sup>1</sup>. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a century of entertainment that has extended its domination over almost every instant of our lives. Such a larger trend is perfectly illustrated by the fact that only in 2004 Americans spent 705.9 billion dollars on entertainment, an amount that corresponded to that year's entire gross national product of Canada<sup>2</sup>.

The public outcry for bread and games touches also the sphere of politics, in which showmanship and spectacle have become prerequisites, if not guarantors, of success. A politician's performance as a rhetor and an entertainer seems to produce marked effect on the approval ratings or legislative achievements, hence politicians' concern with their self-image and reliance on various public relations strategies. As an example let us mention the annual Correspondents' Dinner Party in which Washington's media, show business and political crème de la crème assemble. The event is always adorned by a humorous and jocular speech delivered by the incumbent president, who has a unique chance to show his acting talent and entertain the public in a fashion similar to a stand-up comedian. Jokes made by presidents usually receive media coverage and social-media footprint. Additionally, presidents also

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<sup>1</sup> U. Eco, *Rakiem – Gorąca wojna i populizm mediów*, Wydawnictwo W.A.B, Warszawa 2007, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Source: J. Cohen, "America's culture of entertainment," <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/americans-value-entertainment-studies-show> [11-07-1016].

make guest appearances in American talk shows, a practice that used to be reserved only for show business celebrities.

By all means, politicians want to stay “in-touch” with their constituency. The telegenic, outwardly-likeable, mediawise politicians who imitate common parlance have much greater chances to win over the masses. Nevertheless, even our appreciation of politician’s showmanship skills should never become the most important qualification by means of which we judge his or her merit.

Elvin T. Lim in his excellent book *Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush* investigates the impoverishment and decline in quality of the American presidential rhetoric of the recent decades. It seems the contemporary politicians developed a taste for a rhetoric that oversimplifies the reality and immerses itself in “applause-rendering platitudes”<sup>3</sup>. Lim points to the causal relationship between politics and the progressing corruption of language in public debate as well as expressively states that “[...] much that is wrong in American politics today begins with the words that emanate from highest officeholders and principal spokesperson”<sup>4</sup>.

In order to mobilize and consolidate their social cachet politicians pander to audiences rather than engage in in-depth and reasoned public consultations. The rise of the aural culture and the mass media has charted a new vector in politics, in which salient decisions are hastened by dictates of crowd’s emotions and stand in sharp contrast to careful deliberation. Not to mention, that nowadays we even allow the popular culture, in particular Hollywood productions or TV series like *House of Cards*, to shape our perception of politics and politicians. We should not be surprised that the world of politics, just like any other business, tries to adjust to the needs or expectations of its clientele. The carnivalesque politics seeks the popular support, it tries to sell a product (being a politician or an ideal), hence its discourse surrenders to emotions rather than to circumspect deliberation. And that, in turn, creates a favorable milieu, especially in the context of the contemporary situation on the international arena, for the nascent radicalization of both worldviews and language of the public discourse.

### 3. Radicalization of public discourse as an aftermath of 9/11

Radicalization is not a new phenomenon in American culture, as its first manifestations emerged with the Civil Rights Movement of 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, it is not a solely American problem, as it is also gradually occupying more space in the

<sup>3</sup> E.T. Lim, *The Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush*, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., p. 10.

European public debate<sup>5</sup>. Yet, I have the temerity to suggest that, in the context of the U.S., radicalization gained impetus in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and reached an unprecedented scale. The post-September 11 public discourse was colored by emotional and aggressive note that determined the following American domestic and foreign policies. Such a frenzied rhetoric was unleashed primarily by the Bush administration, still we need to remember that it was duplicated by mass media and even academic circles without giving it much thought<sup>6</sup>.

The trademark of George W. Bush's rhetoric of that period was a sensationalistic language and resonant imagery that instilled fear in American society and, subsequently, allowed Bush to galvanize popular support to deploy American troops first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq. Suffice it to say, that the American nation let itself be carried away by Bush's rhetoric of the "evil Other", religious crusades and the clash of civilizations. The emotive language of the Bush administration and the media reverberated powerfully in the society, allowing at the same time to nullify any voices of discontent with the official stance adopted by the U.S. government<sup>7</sup>.

The inflammatory language etched its way into the American culture, thus transforming the very social relations in the U.S. – consequences of which we witness at present moment. Jonathan J. Edwards writes about "relatively recent turning to the language of radicalization in political, legal, academic and media discourses"<sup>8</sup>. In fact, the references to radicalization as such became increasingly noticeable after 2004, when George W. Bush's rhetoric of evil used to explain the problem of global terrorism was replaced in the public debate by the rhetoric of radicalization<sup>9</sup>. The fact that the phenomenon of radicalization became a prominent feature of public debate is beside the point. What is really important is the qualitative change of the language of the public debate. Andrzej Lubowski, Polish economist living in the United States, wrote in his book *Alfabet Amerykański* that the one thing that definitely changed for worse in the U.S. ever since he settled there is the TV, and the quality of information served to the public by such channels like, for example Fox News.

Fox News is a channel commonly perceived as favoring the Republican Party, an image that is difficult to shed as Roger Ailes, former media consultant for Re-

<sup>5</sup> J. Kirchick, *Among the Thugs – Donald Trump, white nationalists, and the politics of the crowd*, "National Review" 2016, vol. 68, no. 6, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on George W. Bush's rhetoric and the role of media in the build-up to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq see: D. Kellner, *Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the War on Terror*, "Presidential Studies Quarterly" 2007, vol. 37, no. 4; D. Kellner *From 9/11 to Terror War: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, New York 2003; J. Maggio, *The Presidential Rhetoric of Terror: The (Re)Creation of Reality Immediately after 9/11*, "Politics and Policy" 2007, vol. 35, no. 4.

<sup>7</sup> A.G. Nikolaev and D.V. Porpora, *President Bush's Pre-War Rhetoric on Iraq: Paranoid Style in Action*, "Critical Inquiry in Language Studies" 2006, vol. 3, no. 4, p. 254.

<sup>8</sup> J.J. Edwards, *Figuring Radicalization: Congressional Narratives of Homeland Security and American Muslim Communities*, "Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies" 2015, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 103.

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., p. 103.

publican presidents – Nixon, Reagan and Bush Senior, spearheaded the channel for 20 years (until 2016). Even though the channel adopted the slogan “Fair and Balanced” it is believed to be biased and tendentious. Fox News operates with simple truth in mind – what truly matters is how the news is packaged, not its conformity with truth or facts. The channel is also known for its strong and plain language of moral absolutism that assumes to give voice to angry Americans<sup>10</sup>. To do the justice to Fox News, one must remind that tendentiousness is not solely problem of media with republican inclination, for such media outlets as CNN, CBS or NBC show marked liberal bias.

The interrelatedness of media and politics remains beyond doubt. Hence, we should not be surprised that the harsh language of politics was so quickly seized and replicated by the media after 9/11. George W. Bush, Newt Gingrich, Bill O'Reilly are just a few examples of public figures that excelled at radical views and locutions that have heralded a wind of change. Once unacceptable displays of overheated rhetoric that violates standards of respectful and befitting public debate have plagued the mainstream media. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that such relaxation of media standards has affected other domains of social life.

#### 4. Donald Trump's rhetoric as an example of political radicalization

The iconic example of linguistic radicalization as a broader cultural trend is the controversial figure of Donald Trump, the Republican candidate for president in the 2016 presidential elections in the United States who, much to surprise of many commentators and despite opinion polls, won the presidential race. He seems to be a Carnival-like and radical politician at once, although perhaps the word politician is not his most accurate description. Trump is businessman and celebrity with no political experience. The celebrity factor is here of utmost importance, as polls conducted when Trump decided to run for the Republican presidential nomination revealed that only 6% of Americans were unaware who Donald Trump was<sup>11</sup>. Perhaps Trump has discovered his new vocation because, much to the surprise of the entire world, he kick-started his political career achieving impressively good results. Much of his success is owed to his winning tactics of linguistic seduction, hence it is my intention to probe into Donald Trump's political rhetoric.

Interestingly, Donald Trump very strongly distances himself from politicians. At one of his rallies Trump addressed the public: “Well, you need somebody, because politicians are all talk, no action. Nothing's gonna get done. They will not bring us – believe

<sup>10</sup> A. Lubowski, *Alfabet Amerykański*, Agora S.A., Warszawa 2015, pp. 121–125.

<sup>11</sup> J. Gatehouse, *Crazy like a fox*, “Maclean's” 2016, vol. 129, no. 4, p. 28.



me – to the promised land. They will not”<sup>12</sup>. Trump always refers to politicians as *they* and points to their passiveness as opposed to him, Donald Trump, the man of action, thus implying that he is able to translate his success in business into the success of leading America. Such a short pronouncement has also other underlying components that tell us a lot about Trump’s rhetorical craftiness. His sentences are short, replete with repetitions, fast-paced and retain colloquial style of speaking, which makes them more accessible to average audience and exerts a desired impression of Trump being an “ordinary Joe”. Nevertheless, such simplicity is only superficial because his language is pronouncedly myth-evoking and myths are deeply ingrained in American political culture. The narrative of America’s Exceptionalism, according to which Americans are a chosen nation destined for greatness became a core element of the U.S. scripted identity<sup>13</sup>. By referring to the promised land Trump calls upon a powerful political myth that allows him to prey on people’s patriotic feelings and stimulates the popular imagination. The devil is in the detail, which means that even apparently minor rhetorical stratagems prove to affect the public in an almost indiscernible way.

Trump has proven that he has no aspiration whatsoever for higher rhetoric. Trump has scandalized both American and global public opinion, by means of extravagant behavior, harsh language and polemical, if not unhinged, ideas. The major tenets of his campaign were promises to deport illegal immigrants from the U.S., to build the wall on the Mexican border, to prohibit Muslims from entering the country, even to sanction torture as an interrogation method of the terrorism-suspects, which would mount to being an open violation of Human Rights and the Geneva Convention. His electoral campaign revolved around persuasive strategies and entertainment, leaving far behind the political deliberation and intellectual rigor that should be pivotal pieces of any presidential candidate’s agenda<sup>14</sup>.

Trump’s postulates divided the very Republican party, whose elites launched a campaign #NeverTrump. This campaign turned to be a fiasco, as Trump’s ratings continued to rise and his rallies continued to draw huge crowds. Trump proved to be peerless when it comes to reading the social moods of Americans, disillusioned by the Obama presidency and fearing the ongoing economic, cultural or demographic changes in the United States<sup>15</sup>. Trump’s narcissism, arrogance, xenophobia, bigotry, populist slogans (“to make America great again”), racist jokes, disrespect for social and political conventions – everything that could be a nail in a coffin for any other presidential candidate, astonishingly worked in favor of Donald Trump. Even though his conduct and pronouncements earned him a label of demagogue or even fascist, he has enjoyed a groundswell of support.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Trump Transcript: ‘Our Country Needs a Truly Great Leader,’ <<http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2015/06/16/donald-trump-transcript-our-country-needs-a-truly-great-leader/>> [11-07-2016].

<sup>13</sup> J. Esch, *Legitimizing the War on Terror: Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric*, “Political Psychology” 2010, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 357–366.

<sup>14</sup> B. Beutler, *Trump the Disrupter*, “New Republic” 2016, vol. 247, no. 5, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> J. Heer, *Republic of Fear*, “New Republic” 2016, vol. 247, no. 5, p. 43.

Trump sees himself as an anti-establishment radical who is apparently the only one with a courage to speak unvarnished truth about the condition, if not predicament, of today's America. The recurring themes in his rhetoric are not something new, in fact these are already battle-tested rhetorical strategies used by, e.g. George W. Bush. These gentlemen share their aggressive and sensationalistic language, pandering to anxieties of the American society, Islamophobia, anti-immigrant sentiment or a cowboy-like bravado. Trump's rhetoric is also rife with exhortations to traditional American values or abuse of the Manifest Destiny narrative, manipulation of people's emotions or, finally, binary divisions into them versus us, losers versus winners.

Trump preys on American nationalistic pride and promises "we will make America great again"<sup>16</sup>. By means of such enunciations as "[o]ur country is in serious trouble. We don't have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don't have them"<sup>17</sup> Trump takes advantage of people feeling that America has lost its position in the international arena. Trump promises: "I will be America's greatest defender and most loyal champion. We will not apologize for becoming successful again, but will instead embrace the unique heritage that makes us who we are. The world is most peaceful, and most prosperous, when America is strongest"<sup>18</sup>. Yet again he abuses the deep-seated political myths of American grandeur and also reintroduces the rhetoric of victory, according to which winner takes it all.

Trump asks "When do we beat Mexico at the border? They're laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friend, believe me. But they're killing us economically. The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems"<sup>19</sup>. Such pungent remarks appeal to people's fears and stir up deep-rooted prejudices present in the American society. Trump convinces people that the U.S. is surrounded by enemies, and as we all know – nothing unites people so well like a common enemy. The rhetorical stratagems of Trump are age-old, yet they are tailored to present-day purposes, proving to be extremely effective. Like a best salesman, Trump knows how to seduce people and bend them to his will. His rhetoric sells feelings not ideas or facts, that is why his language is so emotive, plain and simple, honest and harsh at the same time.

Even though Trump purloined trusted and proven linguistic templates, what in fact allowed him to gather his political capital, is his unrivalled ability to exploit the anger of American White people – anger that has proven many times over the years to be the political weapon of limitless potential. Trump turned anxieties and insecurities of American Whites for political advantage. He started to vent their bitterness,

<sup>16</sup> Source: *Donald Trump Transcript: 'Our Country Needs a Truly Great Leader,'* <<http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2015/06/16/donald-trump-transcript-our-country-needs-a-truly-great-leader/>> [11-07-2016].

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Donald J. Trump Foreign Policy Speech, <<https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-foreign-policy-speech>> [11-07-2016].

<sup>19</sup> Source: *Donald Trump Transcript: 'Our Country Needs a Truly Great Leader,'*...



thus becoming the champion of common folk and a bellwether of the (re)awakening culture of the new anger in America. He communicates solidarity with White Americans that feel that the emancipation of various minorities undermined their social position, economic capital or political influence<sup>20</sup>. Trump plays with the notion of White Americans' victim-status and advances white racial grievance to a point unknown in post-Civil Right's America. In the eyes of many, Trump became a representative of the Identitarian movement (another name for white supremacists), which emerged as a reaction towards multiculturalism and political correctness that overpowered the public debate in the U.S.<sup>21</sup>

The culture of the new anger is an indicator of broader cultural transformations undergoing in the U.S. Americans more frequently are exposed to the manifestations of anger, whether in the cinema, sports or business. In fact, we can witness a shift of perception of anger that, being inherently human emotion and also materialization of one's individualism (so revered in American culture), gained wider social acceptance. In the contemporary America, anger and rage became virtues rather than flaws. The public displays of such genuine emotional states ceased to astonish the traditionally conservative and restrained American society.

The undercurrent of discontent among Americans is also related with the need to readdress the issue of political correctness that is believed to only escalate the societal tensions, as it provides a toolkit to mask still unresolved social problems in the U.S. Trump is known for breaking with norms of public debate or with deep-seated cultural taboos. He vociferously states: "I refuse to be politically correct!"<sup>22</sup>. Trump's countless rants and politically incorrect remarks have only helped him to consolidate bigger support, as he has managed to project in the world an image of himself as the one with gumption to voice unpopular truths, such as the one that the members of Black communities have greater chances for success on the job market than the White Americans. It is not in the purview of my paper to comment on the veracity of such statements, but to illustrate simple fact that Trump reintroduced to the American public sphere the long-simmering racial or religious grudges that have been suppressed for decades<sup>23</sup>. Many Americans believe that the political correctness has been pushed to extremes and started to border with one's right to freedom of speech. Trump's popularity only suggests that at least some part of the American society appreciates that in the big world of politics there is someone unafraid of consequences or social stigmatization that the mainstream political correctness might cause. The American society seems to have grown tired of mild, in-offensive language, curtailing their ability to express themselves freely<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> J. Heer, *An Oligarch in Populist's Clothing*, "New Republic" 2015, vol. 246, no. 12, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> J. Kirchick, *Among the Thugs – Donald Trump, white nationalists...*, pp. 30–32.

<sup>22</sup> Source: *Donald J. Trump addresses Terrorism, Immigration and National Security*, <<https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-addresses-terrorism-immigration-and-national-security>> [11-07-2016].

<sup>23</sup> J. Heer, *Republic of Fear...*, p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> J.J. Weinman, *PC-a-plenty*, "Maclean's" 2016, vol. 128, no. 5152, p. 81.

Yet another facet of the progressing radicalization in American public debate is Trump's penchant to speak in most truculent and even offensive fashion, that is a major indicator of people's hidden mindset. Trump speaks openly "We have to be mean now"<sup>25</sup>. His rhetoric runs with verbal aggression, which frequently transforms into a hate speech. Trump launches unashamed attacks on his political opponents, but also entire groups, such as Hispanics, Muslims or women. Still, such an aggressive note that colored Trump's language did not estrange him from the public, on the contrary it became one of the key components of his success.

Media observers notice that many of Trump's insults are formulated as jokes, which is a strategy to mitigate the built-in provocation. Nevertheless, laughter and merriment evoked by such jokes pave a path for an unspoken approval of humiliation or debasing of those he decides to mock and ridicule<sup>26</sup>. The most disturbing aspect of Trump's hate speech is the fact that it already has tangible effects on his supporters. Every now and then throughout his campaign media covered the incidents of physical violence between his followers and opponents that had taken place on Trump's rallies<sup>27</sup>. Trump made a habit of public condemnation of any acts of violence, for the sake of upholding appearances, yet simultaneously he compliments his partisans for their "love of country" as if one could prove his or her patriotism only by engaging in violent actions<sup>28</sup>. Still, even if his demeanor collides with his words a high-impact message is tacitly conveyed to the outside world, namely that violence is acceptable and serviceable.

American culture heavily relies on obtrusive manifestations of strength, as much physical as verbal, and Trump seems to solely make use of the quintessential American values, tropes and myths. Speaking of Donald Trump Michael Scherer wrote: "[t]oughness was his brand [...] transgression his method"<sup>29</sup>. Trump concocted for himself an image resembling a macho cowboy – figure so celebrated and mythologized in American culture. He presents himself as an intransigent man of resolve that favors action and blunt talk. Even if the image of cowboy hijacked so frequently by politicians has lost its original meaning and reputation in recent years, becoming almost a political epithet, it still evokes respect and acclamation among average Americans<sup>30</sup>.

Donald Trump's formula for success is simple and winning: plain language, free-form speeches that imitate common parlance, extravagant behavior, electrifying performance, reading the moods of people, preference for simplicity but not when it comes to persuasive strategies, all these things summed up allow him to mesmerize crowds and muster partisans.

<sup>25</sup> M. Scherer, *Donald Trump*, "Time" 2015, vol. 186, no. 2526, p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> P.J. Williams, *Cruelty, Irony, and Evasion*, "The Nation" 2016, vol. 302, no. 23, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> L. Lalami, *Donald Trump's Hate-In*, "The Nation" 2016, vol. 302, no. 10, pp. 10–11.

<sup>28</sup> J. Heer, *Republic of Fear...*, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> M. Scherer, *Donald Trump...*, p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> E. Kelton, *True Grit*, "Texas Monthly" 2008, vol. 36, no. 7, p. 104.

## 5. Conclusions

Trump is believed to have inaugurated the era of a new style in politics. Still, such an assumption might be countered by the simple fact that he perpetuates already existing rhetorical contrivances of political discourse. Elvin T. Lim wrote about the role of platitudes and punch lines in rendering applause of the public or about the assertive language that serves to communicate to audience the confidence and audacity of the speaker. Anti-intellectual politicians, and Donald Trump doubtlessly is one, oftentimes resort to the so-called linguistic mimicry and intend to imitate the vernacular of common people, thus implying that they are “of the people and therefore for the people”<sup>31</sup>. Dangers pending from such a rhetoric are related to the fact that pathos ousted logos in political discourse – emotions took place of reason<sup>32</sup>. If we value so much the character and intellect of our representatives we should never overlook the language they employ, for it can only create a permissive climate for abuse that might render us to manipulation. The progressing radicalization of the language of the public debate is just one aspect of changing political theater that might involve risk of running amok and engendering democratic societies.

The moral poisoning of the American public sphere started long before Trump shook the tectonic plates of the American politics. The aggrieved mood of the America, started by the panic and anger caused by the 9/11, incurred grave social cost that manifested themselves in the abrupt increase of hate crimes in the United States. In particular, the Muslim minority became a collateral damage of the escalated emotions of the grief-stricken Americans. Donald Trump seems to share similar warlike spirit that has already torn apart the American society. Trump so masterfully playing with fear and emotions of people proves that America faces a moral crisis that might corrode its very identity and that might run counter the multicultural and multiethnic heritage and self-image of the U.S. As Jeet Heer of New Republic wrote in his symptomatic article titled “Republic of Fear”: “Donald Trump has already transformed American culture. Even if he loses the election, Trumpism is here to stay”<sup>33</sup>. Trump’s radical rhetoric fell on a favorable ground of frustrated America and produced expected effects, which might suggest that his sudden political rise will eventually encourage others to follow in his footsteps and use similar language to muster popular support. Yet we should bear in mind that narratives that invite strong emotions sooner or later lead to violent actions that might spiral out of control and entail far-reaching and disastrous consequences.

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<sup>31</sup> E.T. Lim, *The Anti-Intellectual Presidency...*, p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., pp. 63–70.

<sup>33</sup> Jeet Heer, *Republic of Fear...*, p. 43.

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